

CLAIMS:

1. Apparatus for applying a signature or other written  
date to a file or document created, stored and/or  
displayed in html format, the apparatus comprising  
means for capturing said hand written data in a first  
data format, means for converting said hand written  
data into Html format and means for applying said  
hand written data in html format in said file or  
document.
2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said hand  
written data is captured in an image file format.
3. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said means  
for creating and capturing the hand written data  
comprises a pen-based input strip.
4. Apparatus according to claim 1, comprising means for  
attaching a key or link into a software package for  
creating and transmitting documents in html format.
5. Apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said key or  
link creates an additional option within the software  
package which, when selected, retrieves the hand  
written data created on the input strip and captured  
electronically in image file format, converts the  
data from an image file to html format, and adds the  
hand written data to an html document in a user-  
defined position.

6. Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said apparatus calls for the hand written data to be created and captured when the key or link is selected and then substantially immediately converts it to html format and adds it to the html document.

7. Apparatus according to claim 1, including means for creating an encryptive code number associated with hand written data which has been created, captured and converted to html format.

8. Apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said encryptive code is arranged to carry information which permits one or more of the following:

- a) to produce a visual representation of the signature when decoded (i.e. to allow visual verification by the recipient);
- b) to allow a more rigorous comparison of the key characteristics of the signature with a signature previously received from the same sender (i.e. the encrypted code number comprises an encrypted digitised summary of the key characteristics of the incoming signature which can be compared with the encrypted code number associated with a signature previously received from the same sender, and the probability that the writer of the two signatures is the same person can be calculated and displayed);

- c) to display the date and/or time on the sender's PC when the handwritten data was added to the document (e.g. when it was signed);
- d) to display the date and time on a remote internet server when the handwritten data was added to the document (e.g. when it was signed) if the sender was logged onto the Internet at the time of signature (it should be borne in mind that the encrypted code number might indicate the date and time that the handwritten data was added to the document in the case where it was converted to html format and added to the document in real time, and in the case where a stored image file is converted to html format and added to the document);
- e) to display an indication as to whether or not the document has been changed since the handwritten date (e.g. signature) was added;
- f) to utilise an optional PIN or security code number (for example, a 5-digit base code) which can be incorporated into the encrypted code number and which has been pre-agreed between two or more parties (for example, verbally), such that the handwritten data (e.g. signature) cannot be visually reproduced and a comparison between the signature and a previously-stored handwritten date (e.g. signature) cannot be performed without the recipient having entered the pre-agreed security code number. It is envisaged the apparatus could be supplied with a default security code number which can be

changed by the user(s) if this feature is required to be utilised.

9. A method for applying a signature or other hand written data to a file or document created, stored and/or displayed in Html format, the method comprising the steps of capturing the hand written data in a first data format, converting said hand written data into html format, and applying said hand written data in html format to said file or document.